(a) whether it is a fact that despite running special trains on festival occasions, passengers do not get seats and even space to stand;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that the old and the handicapped passengers have to face lot of inconvenience due to shortage of passenger facilities like wheel chair at new Delhi railway station of the Capital;

(c) if so, whether Government would make any action plan to enhance passenger facilities at all the railway stations including Delhi; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) During peak rush period the demand outstrips the availability of accommodation in popular trains.

(b) For the guidance and use of old/handicapped passengers at New Delhi station adequate wheel chairs have been provided and notice about their availability with the concerned officials has been displayed at conspicuous place.

(c) and (d) The Government has planned to provide the short term facilities at all stations including Delhi. Short term facilities are—(i) standard ramps for barrier free entry, (ii) earmarking parking lots for vehicles used by disabled persons, (iii) non-slippery walkway, (iv) signages, (v) toilets suitable for needs of handicapped persons, (vi) water taps suitable for needs of handicapped persons and (vii) "May I Help You" booths. Above facilities have already been provided at all "A-1" and "A" category stations. At remaining categories of stations, these facilities have been planned in phased manner.

Long term facilities comprise of (i) provision of facility for inter platform transfer and (ii) engraving on edges of platforms. These are planned after availability fo short term facilities.

Vacancy of guards in Railways

†1302. SHRI MOTILAL VORA:
SHRI SATYAVRAT CHATURVEDI:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of vacant posts of guards in different zones in Railways and since when these are vacant;

(b) whether it is a fact that incidents of loot, murder, etc. are happening off and on in trains due to lack of guards; and

(c) if so, the steps Government is taking to check these incidents and to ensue safe journey for travellers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) The approximate vacant posts of Guards in different zonal railways as on 01.10.07 are:

Central Railway	190	Eastern Railway	338
East Central Railway	144	East Coast Railway	225
Northern Railway	342	North Central Railway	321
North Eastern Railway	073	Northeast Frontier Railway	161
North Western Railway	160	Southern Railway	104

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

South Central Railway	254	South Eastern Railway	129
South East Central Railway	217	South Western Railway	246
Western Railway	149	West Central Railway	158

(b) No, Sir.

(c) To provide better security to the traveling passengers in trains and passenger areas, the RPF Act, 1957 and the Railways Act, 1989 have been amended to enable the Railways, through the Railway Protection Force, to effectively supplement the efforts of the State Governments in controlling crime on the Railways. The Railway Protection Force staff are also being deployed to escort more than 1450 trains on an average and deployed in the passenger area to augment the efforts of the State Governments.

1. Important trains are being checked with an element of surprise and surveillance is being kept on the activities of criminals involved in drugging and thefts of passengers' belonging.
2. Armed Railway Protection Force staffs are deployed to escort selected sensitive trains specially during night for the safety and security of travelling passengers and their luggage.
3. Special Squads are briefed and sensitized by Railway Protection Force officers regularly to be alert on duty to check such crime in trains.
4. Supervisory staff have been instructed to make frequent checks in trains to ensure safety and security of travelling public.
5. Coordination meeting with the Government Railway Police Chiefs at Zonal and Divisional levels are organized to take coordinated action in this regard.
6. Government Railway Police and Railway Protection Force staff are deputed on the platforms to keep watch on anti-social elements.

Improving the rail freight revenue

1303. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether accroding to railway freight revenue report for April-May, 2007 there was a tepid start to the new fiscal and overall freight loading for the two months which registered a low key 6.13 per cent growth and the rate of growth is not only lower than Railway Ministry's project of 9 per cent for this fiscal, it is also lower than the 9.27 per cent growth achieved in April-May, 2006;

(b) if so, what are the main reasons of the same; and

(c) what are the concrete steps Government proposed to take to improve the rail freight revenue in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Yes, Sir. However, the target of freight loading for 2007-08 is 7.77% more than last year.

(b) The main reasons for a lower growth in the period April-May, 2007 as compared to April-May, 2006 was due to decline in loading of fertilizers and foodgrains, which showed